



STATE OF MARYLAND

DHMH News Release

Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

Larry Hogan, Governor - Boyd Rutherford, Lt. Governor - Van T. Mitchell, Secretary

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Statewide order issued for pharmacies to dispense overdose reversal drug *Naloxone can be dispensed now without a prescription under Department program*

Baltimore, MD (December 14, 2015) – To help further combat the heroin and opioid epidemic gripping the state, the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene announced today a statewide standing order allowing pharmacists to dispense naloxone without a prescription under the State's Overdose Response Program.

Naloxone is a prescription medication that safely and effectively reverses overdoses related to opioids, a class of drugs that includes heroin and such prescription pain relievers as oxycodone, hydrocodone, morphine and methadone. Expanding access to naloxone is an important component of Maryland's strategy for reducing overdose deaths, which increased 60 percent statewide between 2010 and 2014. Eighty-six percent of all overdose deaths in 2014 were opioid-related and potentially could have been prevented had naloxone been administered in a timely manner.

The order was issued by Dr. Howard Haft, Deputy Secretary for Public Health Services at Health and Mental Hygiene, using authority granted by a new law. The order allows all Maryland-licensed pharmacists to dispense naloxone without a prescription to anyone trained and certified under the Overdose Response Program. The department has authorized 41 organizations to conduct naloxone trainings and to issue certificates, including all local health departments and a number of treatment programs, community organizations and law enforcement agencies. Nearly 13,000 people have been certified by these organizations since Health and Mental Hygiene's Overdose Response Program began in March 2014. The program provides specialized, in-depth, hands-on training on opioid overdose response and naloxone administration.

To assist pharmacists with naloxone dispensing under the standing order, the department is faxing copies of the order, a guidance document for pharmacists and other materials to every pharmacy in the state. Pharmacists immediately may begin dispensing to anyone with an Overdose Response Program certificate. Certificate holders still must pay for the naloxone through their insurance, with cash or another method.

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In addition to expanding access to naloxone through the Overdose Response Program, the new law also allows physicians, advanced practice nurses, dentists and other healthcare providers to prescribe naloxone to a patient who they believe might be in a position to assist someone experiencing an opioid overdose. This means that Marylanders can go directly to their trusted provider to get naloxone and can be educated on how to use it to save someone's life.

Health and Mental Hygiene encourages pharmacists, other healthcare providers and anyone in interested in obtaining naloxone to visit the Overdose Response Program webpage at <http://goo.gl/TdGm3v>. The website contains copies of the standing order, pharmacist guidance, brochures for certificate holders and patients, and other useful information. In October, the department helped sponsor a healthcare provider training on best practices for prescribing medications to patients with chronic pain, in an effort to stem the tide of opioid abuse.

Anyone who needs help finding substance abuse treatment resources in Maryland should visit our webpage at <http://goo.gl/ayIQ3O>.

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The Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene is the state government agency that protects Maryland's public health and also works to help Marylanders make better health decisions for better health outcomes. Stay connected: www.twitter.com/MarylandDHMH and www.facebook.com/MarylandDHMH.